

*To the Mayor, Aldermen, and Members of the Wisbech Urban
District Council.*

GENTLEMEN,

My Annual Report, which I again have the honour of submitting to you, for the Urban Sanitary District of Wisbech, and for the year ending December 31st, 1913, will bear very favourable comparison indeed with those of former years. We have experienced a very remarkable immunity from sickness of an infectious and contagious nature, and it is gratifying to note that only one death during the past 12 months was caused by any of the zymotic diseases, and this was from measles in a child of 1 year old. At no time, during this period, have we experienced any great anxiety in staying the spread of these Diseases, although in every case, we have as usual endeavoured to prevent the spread of disease by isolation, removal to the Infectious Hospital, and a very liberal supply of Disinfectants, as well as Disinfection by the Sanitary Inspector himself, where seemed desirable.

Reviewing the various infectious diseases, Measles, was by far the disease which was the more prevalent: it existed in the early months of the year, and extended to past the half year, and even after this there were several isolated cases; the cases as a whole were very mild in character, and as is so often noticed with such mild cases, but little care is taken to prevent the spread of this malady.

Diphtheria, formerly such a dreaded disease, was found to exist in but 4 cases, all mild in character, and each one speedily recovered.

Typhoid Fever this year was found in but one case, and curiously, this was at the Infectious Diseases Hospital.

Erysipelas, was less prevalent than during the last year, there were 5 recorded cases, all in persons advanced in age, with the exception of one case, and mostly of a mild type.

Scarlet Fever existed in 6 cases only, a very small number, and after the anxiety we experienced in recent years, given great cause for satisfaction.

Whooping Cough was scarcely prevalent to any extent.

Chicken Pox and Mumps were somewhat prevalent in the closing months of the year and were due to its spreading amongst school children, in these cases a longer period of isolation should be adopted, and greater care exercised, than is usual, as the contagiousness in these cases is very lasting.

It being now imperative for me to recapitulate yearly certain facts, so that you may have a knowledge of the existing sanitary conditions prevailing in the District, I might draw your attention to

A. That the general health of the district throughout the year has again been exceptional; that many visits, and inspections of the district have been made, and no pains have been spared in endeavouring to prevent infectious illnesses spreading.

We have no deleterious influence existing which is likely to cause the spread of these diseases, and still better care continues being exercised in the various public schools, which are being kept cleanly, and are periodically Disinfected and attended to.

B. In all cases of notified infection, we have endeavoured to adopt isolation, and removal, with a liberal supply of Disinfectants.

C. Frequently, and often with the Sanitary Inspector, I have visited various parts of the town and district, nuisances have been speedily removed, and with the exception that the slaughter houses might be better kept, the various places are in a satisfactory condition.

D. The Milk supply which is such an important factor, continues to be through vendors, bringing their milk into the town from the surrounding country; the quantity is abundant, and the quality generally excellent.

There are no milk shops existing in the town.

E. The supply of food stuffs has been good, and no food has been condemned during the past year.

F. The Water supply, is as formerly, now practically all obtained from the Marham Hills, the supply is constant under an exceptionally high pressure, and in quantity and quality, all that can be desired; and it is undoubtedly due to this, that your district is so exceptionally free from diphtheritic and enteric diseases.

G. The artificial system of sewerage, since you restored it to its former satisfactory condition, has worked exceedingly well, and little difficulty has been experienced, with the working of the main and smaller drains.

H. The river water is not now used for domestic purposes, and little possibility of ill effects from its contamination can exist.

I. The Scavenging continues as formerly to be done by carts, regularly visiting all the various parts of the town, and has been done satisfactorily, cleanly and well. The use of covered-in carts being a great improvement, and very highly appreciated by the inhabitants.

K. The housing accommodation continues ample, a considerable number of new houses have been built; certainly of a better type, whilst the average number of occupants per house remains the same, viz: four.

But few complaints of overcrowding have come to my knowledge.

L. Accompanying this report, the vital statistics of the district are well shown on the various records, which also show records of previous years for comparison.

Under the Act for the better housing of the working classes, and Town Planning, we have done a large amount of work.

Practically all the various houses in the Wisbech area have been inspected, careful notes taken, and where necessary, I have visited these with the Sanitary Inspector. With respect to the 17 houses in which defects were noted, and not remedied, many of these have now been done.

In those houses where injurious defects were found to exist, a large number of repairs, alterations and general sanitary improvements have been made. You are aware of the recent visits made by members of the Council, accompanied by the Mayor, Town Surveyor, Sanitary Inspector and myself, to the various parts of the town, and as a result many defects which were found, have been ordered to be remedied. The chief defects were damp walls, defective roofs, fixed windows, and defective ventilation, defective spoutings, badly paved and badly drained yards, too crowded conveniences, a few defective closets and drains, and as a consequence general uncleanness. In two cases it was deemed advisable to condemn houses as obstructive dwellings, and one house as in-sanitary. I am anxiously looking forward to the time when it is made imperative to add water flushes to all newly made conveniences; which would enormously improve the existing sanitary conditions of these smaller dwellings, and add to the comforts of the lower classes.

It is particularly gratifying to be able to note the ready response in many cases to the suggested improvements in the yards and dwellings.

In the various factories, the sanitary requirements continue to be kept in a satisfactory condition, but as the class of work done is not detrimental to the health of the many employed in these places, no cause for anxiety exists.

The general cleanly condition continues to exist in the various streets and places, which are well cared for and looked after.

Phthisis, and all other tubercular diseases, are now added as notifiable illnesses, and compared with last year, when there were 44 cases, only 32 such cases were notified to me, and I am glad to find greater care is exercised in the care of these cases.

The number of births during the year was 211, compared with 225 in the previous year. Of these 106 were males and 105 females, giving a birth rate of 19·2 per 1000, and although a fairly satisfactory rate, it should be noted that this is the smallest birth-rate for many years past, but it is very gratifying to find that the deaths amongst infant children this year were but 15, compared with 19 last year, and the much larger numbers in former years. The infantile death-rate being 71 per 1000 of the nett births.

The number of deaths that were registered in the town was 124, compared with 136 last year, again a very satisfactory decrease, giving the exceptionally low death rate of 11·3 for the town, as well as these there were 42 deaths in the Workhouse and 14 in the Hospital, and there were 6 deaths of town residents recorded in outside places, away from the town.

The figures show unmistakably, the very healthy state of the District.

Herewith are the various tabular statements for the past twelve months, together with records of previous years for comparison.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Very faithfully yours,

HARRY GROOM, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

